



# Southwestern Idaho News

ADA, ADAMS, BOISE, CANYON, ELMORE, GEM, OWYHEE, PAYETTE, VALLEY & WASHINGTON COUNTIES

## ECONOMIC TRENDS

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the Boise-Nampa Metropolitan Statistical Area for March was 2.9 percent, unchanged from February. March's rate was nearly a full percentage point below March 2005's rate of 3.8 percent. The civilian labor force actually declined slightly in March, falling by 1,300 people, while total employment dropped by 1,200 as some seasonal holiday workers were released later than normal. There was also some initial indication that people were leaving the labor force because they were unable to find good paying jobs that matched their skills. Still, March's labor force and total employment were significantly higher than a year earlier.

Nonfarm payroll jobs in the Boise area continued an annual increase, gaining 3,000 from February. Twenty-three percent of the jobs were in construction. The metropolitan area's nonfarm jobs total of 263,100 was more than 14,000 above March 2005, an annual gain of 5.7 percent. Construction should continue to lead the way throughout the summer in job

**Southwestern Idaho Table 2: March 2006  
Seasonally Adjusted Labor Force Figures for Southwestern Idaho Counties**

	Civilian Labor Force	Number Unemployed	Percent Unemployed	Number Employed
Ada	193,053	5,205	2.7	187,848
Adams	2,003	127	6.3	1,876
Boise	3,493	133	3.8	3,360
Canyon	80,456	2,694	3.3	77,762
Elmore	11,000	460	4.2	10,540
Gem	7,784	309	4.0	7,475
Owyhee	5,173	112	2.2	5,061
Payette	10,723	556	5.2	10,167
Valley	5,048	189	3.7	4,858
Washington	5,182	218	4.2	4,964
Statewide	758,185	24,502	3.2	733,683

**Southwestern Idaho Table 1: Boise City-Nampa MSA Labor Force & Employment (Ada, Canyon, Boise, Gem and Owyhee counties)**

	Mar 2006*	Feb 2006	Mar 2005	% Change	
				Last Month	Last Year
<b>INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE</b>					
<b>Seasonally Adjusted</b>					
Civilian Labor Force	290,000	291,300	279,500	-0.4	3.8
Unemployment	8,500	8,600	10,700	-1.2	-20.6
% of Labor Force Unemployed	2.9	2.9	3.8		
Total Employment	281,500	282,700	268,800	-0.4	4.7
<b>Unadjusted</b>					
Civilian Labor Force	291,100	292,400	280,600	-0.4	3.7
Unemployment	9,500	10,200	11,900	-6.9	-20.2
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3	3	4		
Total Employment	281,600	282,200	268,700	-0.2	4.8
<b>JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK</b>					
<b>Nonfarm Payroll Jobs**</b>					
GOODS-PRODUCING INDUSTRIES	263,100	260,100	249,000	1.2	5.7
Natural Resources & Construction	51,100	50,300	48,500	1.6	5.4
Construction	21,100	20,500	18,500	2.9	14.1
Manufacturing	20,800	20,100	18,200	3.5	14.3
Durable Goods	30,000	29,800	30,000	0.7	0.0
Wood Product Manufacturing	23,900	23,700	23,500	0.8	1.7
Fabricated Metal Products Mfg.	2,200	2,200	2,100	0.0	4.8
Machinery Manufacturing	1,400	1,400	1,400	0.0	0.0
Computer & Electronic Manufacturing	1,200	1,200	1,300	0.0	-7.7
Transportation Equipment Mfg.	14,000	13,800	14,400	1.4	-2.8
Other Durable Goods	2,200	2,100	2,000	4.8	10.0
Nondurable Goods	2,900	3,000	2,300	-3.3	26.1
Food Manufacturing	6,100	6,100	6,500	0.0	-6.2
Printing & Related Support Activities	4,200	4,300	4,700	-2.3	-10.6
Other Nondurable Goods	700	700	700	0.0	0.0
SERVICE-PROVIDING INDUSTRIES	1,200	1,100	1,100	9.1	9.1
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	212,000	209,800	200,500	1.0	5.7
Trade	51,300	50,600	46,800	1.4	9.6
Wholesale Trade	43,900	43,400	40,000	1.2	9.8
Wholesalers, Durable Goods	12,000	11,900	11,200	0.8	7.1
Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods	7,200	7,300	6,800	-1.4	5.9
Retail Trade	3,500	3,500	3,500	0.0	0.0
Food & Beverage Stores	31,900	31,500	28,800	1.3	10.8
General Merchandise Stores	4,300	4,400	4,100	-2.3	4.9
All Other Retail Trade	6,400	6,300	5,900	1.6	8.5
Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities	21,200	20,800	18,800	1.9	12.8
Utilities	7,400	7,200	6,800	2.8	8.8
Transportation & Warehousing	600	500	600	20.0	0.0
Information	6,800	6,700	6,200	1.5	9.7
Telecommunications	5,200	5,100	5,000	2.0	4.0
Financial Activities	2,400	2,400	2,100	0.0	14.3
Finance & Insurance	14,400	14,400	14,400	0.0	0.0
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	10,100	10,100	10,100	0.0	0.0
Professional & Business Services	4,300	4,300	4,300	0.0	0.0
Professional, Scientific, & Technical	37,600	37,000	36,100	1.6	4.2
Management of Companies & Ent.	11,200	11,300	10,800	-0.9	3.7
Administrative & Support & Waste Mgmt.	5,800	5,800	5,700	0.0	1.8
Educational & Health Services	20,600	19,900	19,600	3.5	5.1
Educational Services	32,000	31,900	30,900	0.3	3.6
Health Care & Social Assistance	3,100	3,000	3,000	3.3	3.3
Hospitals	28,900	28,900	27,900	0.0	3.6
Leisure & Hospitality	9,400	9,300	9,200	1.1	2.2
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	22,700	22,300	21,800	1.8	4.1
Accommodation & Food Services	3,300	3,100	2,800	6.5	17.9
Accommodation	19,400	19,200	19,000	1.0	2.1
Food Services & Drinking Places	2,000	2,100	2,100	-4.8	-4.8
Other Services	17,400	17,100	16,900	1.8	3.0
Total Government	7,300	7,200	6,000	1.4	21.7
Federal Government	41,500	41,300	39,500	0.5	5.1
State & Local Government	5,500	5,400	5,600	1.9	-1.8
State Government	36,000	35,900	33,900	0.3	6.2
State Government Education	13,700	13,700	13,400	0.0	2.2
State Government Administration	4,900	4,900	4,700	0.0	4.3
Local Government	8,800	8,800	8,700	0.0	1.1
Local Government Education	22,300	22,200	20,500	0.5	8.8
Local Government Administration	14,100	14,100	12,700	0.0	11.0
	8,200	8,100	7,800	1.2	5.1

\* Preliminary Estimate

\*\*Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

creation since the residential building boom is still in full swing and a large slate of commercial projects are either under way or will be shortly. Administrative, support and waste management services accounted for 23 percent of March's job increase as placement and temporary agencies experienced a surge in business with the busy spring and summer seasons at hand. The March civilian labor force and total employment figures for all 10 counties in southwestern Idaho are shown in Treasure Valley Table 2 on page 14.

## AREA DEVELOPMENTS

### Boise Metropolitan Area

- Swift and Co. recently announced the sale of its closed Nampa slaughterhouse to Canadian firm XL Foods of Alberta. Hopes are high that XL Foods will reopen the facility and re-employ many of the workers who were displaced when Swift closed its operations last summer.
- Kuna is set to be the new home of equine leather products manufacturer Buckaroo Leather Products. Buckaroo Leather makes saddles, bits, spurs and a variety of other products with sales of nearly \$1 million annually. Buckaroo's new 6,000-square-foot facility is scheduled to open in about 10 months at the corner of Stagecoach and Short Line Roads.
- Meridian manufacturer Michael's of Oregon will be closing its doors by the end of 2006 at the expense of 200 local jobs. Kansas-based Bushnell Outdoor Products, the parent company of Michael's of Oregon, made the announcement that these jobs will be outsourced to other parts of the United States and abroad. The Meridian facility made Uncle Mike's holsters and Hoppes gun cleaning products among other lines of supplies and equipment. Bushnell purchased Michael's of Oregon in August 2005 and cited foreign competition as the reason for the shutdown.
- Despite rising interest rates, home sales in the Treasure Valley increased substantially in the first quarter of 2006 over the same period a year ago. Ada County experienced a 36.5 percent increase in the number of homes sold while Canyon County home sales increased by 42.6 percent. In addition to the large increases in the number of homes sold, the median values of these homes also increased quite dramatically. The median price of all homes sold in Ada County during the first quarter of 2006 was \$221,740, up from \$173,300 in first quarter 2005 for an increase of 27.9 percent. In Canyon County, the median price rose to \$149,000 from \$111,800 in first quarter 2005, an increase of 33.3 percent. There are really two main reasons for the escalation – first there is a tremendous number of people moving into southwestern Idaho from other areas with much higher housing prices, and second, investors are buying up homes in the valley because they are inexpensive compared to other communities in the West.
- During the first half of the Small Business Administration's fiscal year, both the number and the dollar volume of loans processed in the Boise District increased, mostly due to business owners financing the buildings they are operating in. From October 2005 through March 2006, the Boise District approved 452 loans at a value near \$100 million, which was up from 449 loans valued at \$88 million a year earlier. Institutions making the most loans are US Bank with 65, Zions Bank with 61 and D.L. Evans Bank with 40. In terms of dollars loaned, the top three banks were D.L. Evans Bank, which loaned out \$12 million; Zions Bank, which loaned \$10 million; and Farmers and Merchants State Bank, which made loans totaling \$7.5 million.
- Merrill's Egg Farm in Emmett has closed its doors after many years of doing business in Gem County. Eggs shipments ceased the first part of April, and the entire company shutdown at the end of the month.
- Zamzows recently announced it will build two new stores in southwestern Idaho. One will replace the current store in Nampa, and the other will be at a new location in Meridian. Zamzows sells garden and pet supplies among many other products and manufactures its own brand of pet foods and other products at a facility located in Meridian.
- The city of Meridian's tremendous population growth means it will get a second ZIP code, effective July 1. The new ZIP code affects northern Meridian's mostly residential areas. Most of Meridian's businesses will be unaffected by the change.
- Staffing agency Spherion Corp., the sixth largest staffing agency in the country, is currently looking for a franchise owner to open a branch in southwestern Idaho. Spherion focuses mostly on high-tech, accounting, legal, human resources, clerical and industrial workers.
- The valley's two largest hospitals, St. Luke's and St. Alphonsus, are both expanding to Eagle. St. Alphonsus plans to open a \$17 million, 74,000-square-foot facility this fall while St. Luke's will build a \$10 million, 60,000-square-foot facility to open in the fall of 2007. Both will offer outpatient care only and will be available for people to walk in without an appointment.
- According to the Wells Fargo Boise area cost of living report, inflation during March was 0.1 percent,

down from the 0.5 percent increase in February. Transportation costs increased by 2.4 percent during March but other expenses such as groceries dropped to temper fuel costs. Due to the recent run up in the cost of gas and diesel, the April cost of living report will likely show a more significant increase in the area's inflation rate.

- Another national retailer will be opening a store in the BoDo development in downtown Boise. White House Black Market, a retailer of women's clothing that sells only black and white items, plans to open a 3,500-square-foot store in the Sycamore building in October.
- Les Bois Park is once again operating live horse racing. Ada County signed a five-year contract with new tenant Capitol Racing to operate the park and a 46-day racing season. In addition to live racing, simulcast racing will be offered and will be available to racing fans all year. Ada County has made some improvements to Les Bois since it was last open. The turf has been improved in the track infield, much of the structures have been painted, updated wiring was installed and the facility has been made friendlier to patrons with disabilities.

#### Valley County

- Tamarack recently held its sixth property sale netting \$42.7 million for continued construction of the resort. Fifty-three properties sold at prices ranging from \$599,000 up to \$1,099,000. Nineteen of the properties were home-building lots, and 34 were for cottages and town-homes. The top three states with the most buyers were Idaho, California and Texas. France and Mexico led the way in foreign buyers.
- Tamarack also has a busy summer construction season planned. Some of the projects include the Village Plaza of 129 condominiums and 20 commercial spaces, expansion of the ski and mountain bike trails and a restaurant on the mountain. Perhaps the most publicized project is construction of housing for resort employees.

#### Elmore County

- Two new businesses recently opened their doors in Mountain Home. Mexi-Go, a drive through restaurant is part of a chain with locations all over the Pacific Northwest. Affordably Priced Cars and its limousine rental service also opened, hoping to fill a need for cars that are more economically priced than new vehicles currently being sold in Mountain Home.

#### Washington County

- Washington County recently joined the rest of southwestern Idaho in the phenomenon of escalating housing prices. The Washington County Assessors Office reported rising home sales prices are pushing assessed values of single family homes up 20 percent to 30 percent.

#### Adams County

- Brundage Mountain Ski Resort recently announced that the J.R. Simplot Co. has sold its 50 percent ownership in the resort to long-time co-owner, the DeBoer family. Brown's Industries Inc. and Snowy Peaks LLC bought Simplot's share; both entities are owned by Judd and Diane DeBoer and their family. Simplot President Larry Hlobik said the company realizes the recreational potential of Brundage but has opted to focus on its staple businesses of fertilizers and food. Brundage Mountain Resort's first priority will be to expand new runs and lifts that were started several years ago. Brundage has experienced one of the best snow seasons on record with over 400 inches of cumulative snowfall and 147 days of skiing. A summer resort as well, Brundage has plans for a season of chair-lift mountain biking and scenic lift rides along with weddings and concerts at the resort's facilities.

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#### WEB SITE PACKED WITH LABOR MARKET RESOURCES

Idaho's Labor Market Information Web site — <http://lmi.idaho.gov/> — is a key source for economic information about Idaho and how it compares to the U.S. on a variety of topics. The Web site has proven essential to businesses, students, job seekers, economic analysts and others. Find out for yourself.

